The Sacred Rite
OF
Confirmation.
Discourſed of in a
SERMON
Preach'd at *Okeham* in the County of *Rutland*,
At a Confirmation there Adminiſtred, by the Right Reverend Father in God *WILLIAM* Lord Biſhop of *PETERBOROW*.
On *May* 17. 1683.

By *John Savage*, Rector of *Morcot* in *Rutland*.

ACTS 15. 41.
He went through Syria *and* Cilicia *confirming the Churches*

D. Hieron. Dial. adverſ. Luciferianos.
Si Scripturæ authoritas non ſubeſſet, totius Orbis in hanc partem conſenſus inſtar præcepti obtineret

Hookers Eccleſ. Polit. lib. 5. *p.* 355.
There is no cauſe we ſhould doubt of the benefit of Confirmation, but ſurely great cauſe to make complaint of the deep neglect of this Chriſtian Duty. Let Them not take it in evil part, the thing is true, their ſmall regard hereunto hath done harm to the Church of God.

LONDON: Printed by *J. C.* and *F. C.* for *William Henſeman*, at the *King's-head* in *Weſtminſter-hall*. 1683

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OF
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SERMON

Preached at *Oldham* in the County of *Rutland*,

At a Confirmation there Administred, by the Right Reverend Father in God WILLIAM Lord Bishop of PETERBOROW.

On May 17. 1683.

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He went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the Churches

D. Theron Dial. ad Gerontianos.

Si Scripturæ authoritas non subesset, cuius ordis in hanc partem consensus instat præcepti obtinerer.

Hooker Eccles. Polit. lib. 5. p. 256.

There is no cause we should doubt of the benefit of Confirmation, but fare, great cause to make complaint of the deep negligence of this Christian Duty. Let Them not take it in evil part, the thing is true; their small regard hereunto hath done harm to the Church of God.

LONDON: Printed by *J. C.* and *F. C.* for *William Hewitson* at the *Kings-head* in *Westminster-hall*. 1683.

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

WILLIAM

Lord Biſhop of *Peterborow.*

May it pleaſe your Lordſhip,

IN Obedience to your Lordſhips commands, I firſt Preacht, and now Publiſh this enſuing Diſcourſe. Whether I have offer'd any thing herein that may probably win any to a love of and veneration for this great Office, I ſhall not preſume to judge, none being more conſcious of its defects than my ſelf. But ſince it hath paſt your Lordſhips approbation, and was favourably receiv'd by the Reverend my Brethren of the Clergy, I do the leſs value the cenſures of others.

I am not ignorant that this Age, in the Univerſities and Cities eſpecially, abounds with great Scholars and eminent Preachers, the glory of our Church, as well as the envy of our Adverſaries; and I hope thoſe great men will not diſdain to have a Mite thrown in now and then (though by the meaneſt Rural Divine) to make ſome little addition to their Treaſury.

When your Lordſhip firſt limited me to this ſubject, I thought it a barren ſoyl, becauſe not commonly manag'd, but after a few thoughts ſpent upon it, and turning up ſome of the ſurface, I promiſed my ſelf it would prove (to ſpeak like a Countrey-Parſon) of the ſame nature with new broken up ground, which uſually yields a double Crop. I

found the matter so copious, and the Office, which St. Paul *reckons amongst his six Fundamentals, so easily defendable, that it has run this Discourse into a more than usual length; for which I hope the great usefulness of the Subject, though not the way of handling it, will apologize, if not make sufficient amends.*

That your Lordship hath highly advanced the honour and interest of this Church in general, and particularly retriev'd the almost lost Reputation of this Sacred Office, stopping for ever the mouths of our Adversaries (who are apt to bellow against unpreaching Bishops, and the neglect of those Offices that bring no secular advantage) by your frequent Preachings, publick Exhortations, and constant Ministration of this holy Office; That by your candour and condescension, you oblige your Clergy to a regular Conformity, and a love to your Lordships injunctions as well as person: That by force of Argument, manag'd with a winning mildness and sweetness of disposition, you have worn off the natural ruggedness of many of the Dissenters, and prevail'd upon them to promise a submission: These things are not unknown to us who have the happiness to live within your Jurisdiction, nor will it be deem'd a piece of Sycophantry by any who have the least knowledge of your Lordships Person or Actions.

And amongst the many demonstrations of your Lordships known candour, these are not the least, That you command me to Print this ensuing Discourse, thereby shewing your readiness to encourage the industry of the meanest; That you please to undertake the protection of it from the proud and censorious; And that you give me leave in so publick a manner to subscribe my self

Your Lordships most humble
and Obedient Son and Servant,

J. S.

The TEXT.

Acts 8. Chap. 17. v. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost.*

SAint *Luke* having in his Gospel given an account of the Actions and Sayings of our blessed Saviour, from the time of his Birth, till his Ascension into Heaven, (which glorious *Ascension* of his we do this day commemorate; and whose *gifts* soon after bestow'd are on this day to be distributed) does in this Sacred History inform us of some of the most remarkable passages in the Lives of the Holy Apostles. Whereof some are common unto all, others peculiar to a few: those that are peculiar, he restrains especially to St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, the one of the Circumcision, the other the Apostle of the Uncircumcision; and by restraining his History to these two, he does tacitly insinuate, that the rest of the Apostles were no less industrious in their several Provinces to propagate the Gospel of Christ. Amongst those actions that are common unto them all, none more properly relates to the occasion of this present Solemnity, than that remarkable Office of *Confirmation*, here recorded in the Text, which the Apostles by St. *Peter* and St. *John*, their lawful Delegates, did administer to a numerous company of the baptized *Samaritans*.

For St. *Stephen* being Crowned with Martyrdom, *Chap.* 7. and a violent persecution being rais'd against the Church, in the beginning of the 8th, the six surviving Deacons, with many other Christian Professors, were scattered abroad throughout the Regions of *Judea* and *Samaria*, preaching the Gospel of Christ. But the Apostles having not as yet compos'd the common Symbol of Faith, or having not by lot or suffrage assign'd to themselves their several Provinces, continued still at *Jerusalem*, where they soon received the joyful news

of

of that wonderful ſucceſs the Goſpel of Chriſt had obtained by the preaching of St. *Philip* the Deacon, who by Apoſtolical aſſignment, as ſome, or by Divine impulſe, as others, going to *Sebaſte*, a Town founded by *Herod* the great to the honour of *Auguſtus*, and the Metropolitan City of *Samaria*, verſe the fifth, reſcu'd that whole City from the inchantments of *Simon* the Sorcerer, and converted them to Chriſtianity: for though *all from the leaſt to the greateſt had given heed unto Simon, ſaying, This man is the great power of God*, v. 10. yet when *they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, they were Baptized both men and women*, v. 12. and thoſe were the people *with one accord*, v. 6. The news whereof coming to the Colledge of the Apoſtles, then reſiding at *Jeruſalem*, they unanimouſly ſent *Peter* and *John* to compleat and perfect by their Apoſtolical Authority what was ſo happily begun by *Philip* the Deacon, v. 14. who being come to *Samaria*, and *praying for them that they might receive the holy Ghoſt*, (and that in a more eminent and abundant meaſure than they had at their Baptiſm) v. 15. their holy and fervent prayers met with a ſuitable return, this Sacred Hiſtorian aſſuring us in the words of the Text, *That having then laid their hands on them, they received the holy Ghoſt.*

And what was then done by the Apoſtles in their own perſons, we are now met together by the good providence of God, to ſee in ſome meaſure perform'd by one of the Apoſtles Succeſſors, who though he pretends not by vertue of his Succeſſion to the ſame power the Apoſtles were endowed with, *viz.* Of conveying the gift of working Miracles, and ſpeaking with unknown Tongues, thoſe gifts, together with their neceſſity in the infancy of the Church, having long ſince ceaſed; yet may juſtly challenge from thoſe his Predeceſſors, all that power that is now neceſſary and eſſential to the edifying and governing of a well-conſtituted Church, part of which does conſiſt in this holy Rite of *Confirmation*, which he is now about to adminiſter to all that are duely qualified; and I hope All are ſo, (through the care and induſtry of their ſeveral Paſtors) that are here met this day with an intention to receive this holy Myſtery. And the greater grounds we have to

hope it, when we consider how many thousands in this little County, beyond the usual number, were prevail'd upon and prepar'd for receiving the holy Eucharist at *Easter* last, in which, blessed be God, we had almost as wonderful a success as St. *Philip* had in that City of *Samaria*, whole shoals and multitudes of people, (the most inveterate of Rebels and Dissenters not excepted) throwing off those Sorceries and Enchantments wherewith they had lately been deluded, and coming with at least an outward Reverence and Devotion to that holy Sacrament.

'Tis true, we the Officers of our Lord, in pursuance of our original Commission, and the late Orders to us directed, were fore'd to go into the *high-ways and hedges*, to *compel* some straglers to come in, that these his Consecrated Houses might be *filled*; but when we came unto them, we found it was their disuse and ignorance of the thing that created a prejudice; for when they submitted to the Summons, and observed the decorum and gravity us'd in the celebrating of those holy mysteries, their fear of the Laws was presently chang'd into a love for their duty; and their seeming alacrity and reverence, makes us almost to think that Proctors and Apparitors will be altogether as useless now, as they were in the Church at *Jerusalem*, where the Disciples *continued with one accord in the Temple*. Guardians of Churches, without the guilt of Perjury, may shortly make their presentments *Omnia bene*; Canons and Constitutions may hereafter be made without the necessity of affixing *Anathema's*; and we shall again recover the golden age, where *he that runs will read* his duty, and every one will be Religious without the force of Coercive Laws.

These good Successes and happy Omens we must acknowledge due (under God) to the care and vigilance of our right Reverend Diocesan, by which in some competent measure, as far as his Sphere reaches, he hath secur'd unto us the happiness of this present Age. But his care for us is not here terminated; that he might derive the like Piety and Devotion to Posterity, and the succeeding Ages might share with us in the happy influences of his wise government, he did by the like Orders lately enjoyn his Clergy to prepare the younger

sort

sort by Catechizing and wholsome Instructions for the worthy partaking of this holy Ordinance. And thanks be to God, we do this day see the joyful fruits of our labours: we have indeed heretofore toyl'd day and night, and have caught little or nothing; but when by the assistance of our Saviour, and the direction of so wise a Pilot, we threw out our net, behold what a vast multitude is here encompassed, both small and great! and though the draught be so large, we need no Trammers to secure our vessel; it will neither sink with its own weight, nor will the waves of this world prevail against it, if to a lively faith in Christ we adde a reciprocal love amongst our selves, and unanimously resolve to carry on what is thus so happily begun.

And that I according to my model may make one step towards the carrying on of this great work, and the meanest in the Auditory may understand the nature of this great Office that is now about to be celebrated, let me humbly crave your attention whilst I insist on this remarkable instance, which the Apostles have here given us, a summary account whereof we have in the words of the Text:

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost.

Which words afford us these two Generals.

1. The celebration of a holy Rite or Ceremony: *Then laid they their hands on them.*

2. The wonderful effects or consequents of it: *And they received the holy Ghost.*

In treating of the first General, I shall briefly discourse of these following things.

1. Of this Ceremony in general, shewing you the lawfulness of it.

2. Of the nature of this particular Ceremony, what it is significative of, the great ends and purposes for which it was originally used, and afterwards instituted and practised in the Christian Church; together with the material duty that this Ceremony did heretofore wait upon and accompany; and from thence the expedience of it will be discerned.

3. I shall discover to you that peculiar Order of persons to whom the administration of this holy Office is restrained,

with

with some probable Reasons of such restriction; and from thence we shall see the honour and veneration we ought to have for it; not so much in it self considered, but as it is annext to the highest Order in the Church, the Apostles and the succeeding Bishops.

4. I shall lay down the qualifications of those to whom this Office is to be administred; and from thence the holiness of it will appear, it being not promiscuously to be administred to all that shall rudely and unpreparedly offer themselves, but set apart for, and appropriated to sober and competently intelligent Christians.

In treating of the second General, I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What were the great and stupendious effects of it upon its first institution and practice.

2. That the consequents of it now upon its present administration by Episcopal, are altogether as valuable as those were that ensu'd upon the imposition of Apostolical hands.

3. That the seeming disproportion betwixt the outward means and the inward effects, ought not to prejudice any considerative person against the power and efficacy thereof.

4. We shall from the premised Positions easily infer the excellency and usefulness of this holy Office, if not the necessity of its continuance in the Christian Church: And so briefly conclude our discourse with humble and modest Persuasives to all persons concern'd.

I begin with the first General, and under that with the first thing that offers it self to our consideration. 1 *Gen.*

1. And that is to treat of this Ceremony in general. That imposition of hands is a meer Ceremony, having nothing of intrinsick goodness to recommend its use unto us, is acknowledged by all; and yet this Ceremony (which abstractedly consider'd was neither good nor evil, which might have been done or left undone *pro libitu*, according to the pleasure or discretion of its Authors, without any prejudice to the Church, or violation of any Christian Law) was used by our Saviour upon several occasions, and practised by the Apostles in this and many other instances. Now is it not much that our Saviour and his Apostles should be so ceremonious, that they should offer to practise that at which the Consci-

ences of tender Christians might probably be offended? what? had they no regard to the scruples that might possibly arise in the new converted *Samaritans*, or could they not foresee what offences more enlightned Christians in after-ages would take at such legal worship, such matters of indifferency in Gods service? Neither of these can be imputable to our Saviour, and no doubt the Apostles had a just regard to the one, and by inspiration or rational conjecture did foresee the other; but they well understood that not such indifferent things by them practised, but the indiscretion of some and the malice of others would create those prejudices; they might pity such persons as weak and wicked, but this was not reason sufficient to deny the Service or Discipline of the Church its innocent and significant Ceremonies, because there are fools or mad men that will either laugh or rayl at them.

That God did actually restrain the natural liberty of man before the Law was delivered, nay before Circumcision was enjoyn'd, is plain from many instances, particularly from
Gen. 9. 4. some of those seven precepts delivered by God to the Sons of *Noah*, which in themselves considered, are of an indifferent nature, and could not be esteemed by the Heathen Proselytes
Acts 15. 28 of *Antioch* to be what the Apostles called them, *necessary things*, had they not been made necessary to them by a former positive inhibition, or at least at that time become necessary in respect of the end they aimed at; the restraining our liberty in things indifferent being sometimes absolutely necessary, in order to the peace and unity of the Church.

And as God before the Law did restrain mans liberty from several things indifferent; so when the Law was to be abrogated, our Saviour does however by a positive injunction tye us up to the observance of some indifferent things. Nay, he was so far from scrupling the use of lawful and innocent Rites, that he adopted two Jewish Ceremonies into the Christian Doctrine; the one from Baptizing of Proselytes, and the other from the *Posthænum* of the Paschal Lamb; neither of
St. Mat. 28. 19. which was enjoyned by the Levitical Law, and yet both of them appointed by him as the lasting and perpetual Sacra-
St. Mat. 26. 26. ments of his Church. By his indispensable enjoyning onely

these

theſe two, he did ſignifie his diſlike of that burthenſome variety which the Law and the traditions of the Elders requir'd; but by appointing theſe two, he did alſo ſhew that it is not unlawful under the Goſpel to appoint Rites and Ceremonies, ſo they be for order and edification. And this our Saviour in many other inſtances did intimate unto us. By a word from his mouth he might have infus'd his holy Spirit into the hearts of his Apoſtles, but his infinite wiſdom rather made choice to joyn with it that ſignificant ceremony of *breathing on them*, thereby ſignifying, that he did at that inſtant immediately from himſelf convey the holy Ghoſt unto them. And to come cloſer to our preſent purpoſe; Had our Saviour been nice and ſcrupulous in ſuch matters of indifferency, the pronouncing his benediction on the children that were brought unto him had been ſufficient; he had never *taken them up into his arms and laid his hands upon them*, uſing Ceremonis burthenſome to himſelf, as well as offenſive to others.

St. John 20.22.

St. Mark 10.16.

I need not inſtance in that famous Council celebrated at *Jeruſalem* by the Apoſtles; nor need I recount the Apoſtles Canons collected by *Clemens Romanus*, even thoſe that are accounted genuine; wherein their Chriſtian as well as natural liberty was reſtrain'd, and by which they conſulted not the cavils and petulant humours of Gainſayers, but the peace and ſafety of the Church. Let it ſuffice that holy Scriptures do abundantly teſtifie this to be the conſtant practice of the Apoſtles, when they thought it a good expedient for Peace or Decency: Thus we find St. *Paul* to make an order, not onely in the Churches of *Galatia*, but in *Corinth* too, *that on the firſt day of the week collections ſhould be made for the neceſſitous Saints at Jeruſalem*. Now the *Corinthians* were generally rich, and (not unlikely) ſawcy and conceited, as appears from the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, and thoſe two genuine ones of the aforeſaid *Clemens*; and ſuppoſe any of them had objected againſt this order, that Chriſt had freed them from the Law of ordinances, that Months, and Years, and Days, were not now to be obſerv'd, that this ſubſtantial duty of charity might as well be performed on any other day as well as the firſt, and therefore their Chriſtian liberty ought not to be invaded; what think ye would St. *Paul* have done in this caſe?

Acts 15. 28.

1 Cor. 16. 1.

would he have receded from his Apoſtolical power, and gratified the malepert humours of a few of thoſe rich, but ſcrupulous *Corinthians*? undoubtedly he would not; for an Order being once made upon mature deliberation by lawful authority, if reſcinded upon no other conſideration, but becauſe every mans judgment cannot approve of, or every ones humour will not comply with it, opens a door for all Faction and Schiſm, and quite unhinges the whole frame of Government; St. *Paul* ſurely would have viſited ſuch perſons with the *rod*, and not *in the ſpirit of meekneſs*; and have *delivered them up unto Satan*, as he did *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, for withſtanding his word.

1 Tim. 1. 20. 2 Tim. 4. 15.

That common ſaying in the mouth of every late Diſſenter, *viz.* That God requireth the Heart of man, and not his Hat, St. *Paul* clearly proves to be a vulgar errour; for he tells us, That *every man praying or prophecying* (which belongs to the people as well as the Prieſt) *having his head covered, diſhonoureth his head*; *i. e.* by ſuch an irreverent poſture, (during the Office either of Praying or Preaching) diſhonoureth Chriſt; for Chriſt is the Head of man.

1 Cor. 11. 4 1 Cor. 11. 3

When the Apoſtles had Manacles on their hands, and Fetters on their legs, 'tis likely they conſulted their own eaſe, in finding out fit poſtures for offering up their Prayers; but when thoſe impediments were removed, and the ſhackles thrown off, they *bended their knees* and *lifted up their hands* in their conſtant Devotions; this being agreeable to the pattern our Saviour had given them, who in the garden *kneeled down and prayed*. Thus St. *Paul* entring into the Oratory on the ſea-ſhore, *kneeled down and prayed*. And *for this cauſe bow I my knees unto the God and Father, &c.* And he requires the Chriſtians to *lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting*. So ceremonious were Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that they would not *ſit* when they could *kneel*; they would not irreverently lean upon their elbows, when they could lift up holy hands.

Acts 16. 25. St. Luke 22. 41. Acts 21. 5. Eph. 3. 14. 1 Tim. 2. 8.

Sitting or leaning (if that can be proved to have been the poſture) was well enough becoming the Apoſtles at the firſt inſtitution of the Lords Supper; Chriſt being then in the fleſh, in his ſtate of humiliation, and not requiring from them

them then those outward tokens of Divine Worship or Adoration: But now, being glorified as God, and challenging obeysance from Men and Angels, Holy Church for good reason hath changed that posture of *Leaning* for this of *Kneeling*: For *although we have known Christ after the flesh*, and leaning in his bosom might be the effect of this great condescention, yet seeing we *know him so no more*, seeing he hath declared himself to be *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last, *God blessed for ever*; 'tis fit we should change that familiar way of communicating with him; and lest we should be accounted *Socinians* (who use a Table-gesture, as not owning the Divinity of our Saviour) with all humility upon our knees revere and adore, not the Consecrated Elements, but the glorified Person of the Blessed Jesus. Rev. 1. 8, 11.

But that we may speak particularly to the instance that is here before us, the Apostles were not scrupulous to use this ceremony in the Text, although joyned with Prayer, a substantial part of Divine Worship; nay, although it was amongst the *Samaritans*, who from a Doctrine that our Saviour had taught them, might be as much prejudiced against such practices, as our lately nice and scrupulous Dissenters. They might have objected after this manner; Did not your Master, in whose name ye teach, tell a woman of our City that *God is a Spirit*, *and he that will worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*? and do you his pretended Disciples come into our City and act contrary to your Masters Doctrine? either renounce your pretended Discipleship, or lay aside these childish and Superstitious Ceremonies, which are so inconsistent with the worshipping of God in Spirit and in Truth. 'Tis true, the *Samaritans* might have objected this, but we find they were wiser than to do so; they well understood that our Saviour in that saying of his, alluded to the Religion to which they had hitherto been addicted, a Religion of a mixt nature, consisting of Jewish Sacrifices, offered up not onely to the God of *Israel*, but to Heathen Idols; and therefore the hour would come when those Jewish Sacrifices would be laid aside, and God would be worshipped with the spirits of men, and not with the bodies of Bulls and of Goats; and those Heathen Idols which are vanity or a lye, St. John 4. 24, 25. 2 Kings 17. 24, 26, 29.

must

must be dasht to pieces, and God who is the eternal truth, must be worshipped by them. This they knew to be our Saviours meaning, and that such innocent ceremonies were no way inconsistent with that Spiritual worship he required.

So that you see though these were babes in Christ, and as tenderly to be dealt with as new-born Infants, yet this ceremony joyned with Prayer, as the Apostles would not wave it, so the *Samaritans* were wiser than to be scandalized at it.

This then being a plain and undeniable truth, that innocent and significant Ceremonies may lawfully be used in the Church of Christ, Proceed we to the second thing.

II. To inquire into the nature of this particular Ceremony, what it is significative of, &c.

I need not tell you that the hand is the member or instrument by which we bestow our largesses, or convey our gifts and kindnesses to others; nor that even Nature carries the Fathers hand towards the Childs head, although at that instant he knows not how or why he does it, when he outwardly prays for, or inwardly wishes him a blessing.

The Eastern Heathens were not strangers to this custom; *Naaman* the *Syrian* being offended at the Prophet for directing him to so unlikely a cure, as *washing seven times in the River Jordan*, hastingly replyed, *I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God, and strike or lay his hands over the place, and recover the leper.*

2 Kings 5. 9.

And that this Ceremony long before the giving of the Law was usually joyned with paternal benedictions, is plain from the Father of the Patriarchs, who by prayer and *imposition of hands* blessed the Sons of *Joseph*.

Gen. 48. 14.

Under the Law the consecration of things or persons to the service of God, was by Divine appointment to be performed by *laying on of hands*. So when *Moses* made *Joshua* partner with him in his Government, and conveyed to him the right of succession, by Gods commandment, he *laid his hands upon him*, by which he did not only impart the honour, but the more necessary qualifications of Majesty; for by this he became *full of the spirit of wisdom*, *Moses having laid his hands upon him*, Deut. 34. 9.

Num. 8. 10. 12.

Num. 27. 18.

And

And as Blessings spiritual and temporal were convey'd by imposition of hands under the Law; so our Saviour and his Apostles under the Gospel thought good to retain that Ceremony, when they recovered the Sick, when they absolv'd the Penitents, when they blessed Infants, when they Confirm'd the Baptized, and when they ordain'd Priests and Deacons. To instance in each of these, would require more time than is here allotted; its own evidence makes it sufficient that I hint unto you, that in all these several Offices, together with the substantial duty of Prayer, they made use of this very antient Ceremony; and that probably for these two Reasons.

1. To signifie that at that time there were true and real (not airy or imaginary) Blessings convey'd to the partakers; for what can be more real than the Spirit of Wisdom and godly Fear? what can be more real than Courage and Magnanimity sufficient to conquer the World, and baffle the strongest Enemies of mankind, as I shall have occasion presently to shew? and what could better signifie the real exhibition of these, than laying their Hands on them?

2. To signifie that the Bishops and Pastors of the Church were the ordinary Means and Instruments, the Hands which God makes use of to convey his Gifts and communicate his Blessings unto men. Such publick and solemn Offices as these, wherein extraordinary Blessings were invocated, as they were not rudely and nakedly to be administred without the decent attendance of some significant Ceremonies, so neither were they to be perform'd, nor the Blessings to be expected, without the ministration of consecrated persons. 'Tis their Office to attend us from our Birth to our Grave; by their hands we are regenerated in the *laver of Baptism*; by their hands we are abundantly strengthened against all spiritual Enemies in *Confirmation*; from their hands we receive the holy *Eucharist*, the benefits of our Saviours Death, and the pledge of his eternal Love; from their hands, if we fall under the censures of the Church, we receive *Absolution*; and from the laying on of their hands, together with the holy Chrism, (a custom far different from what is now us'd in the Church of *Rome*) the Primitive Christians were freed from their several bodily Distempers; or at least from their hands

they

they then received the Symbol of Christs Body and Bloud, as the last and eternal *Viaticum* of their Souls. I should be infinite in recounting unto you all the Blessings which God by these his Servants was and is pleased to communicate unto men, and that under this holy and significant Rite of *Imposition of Hands*.

Here then, in this solemn Office of *Confirmation*, great and unspeakable Blessings being to be convey'd, and those by his superiour Servants the principal Stewards of his Houshold, what fitter and more significant Rite could possibly be devis'd, whereby to secure a Blessing to the one, and Honour to the other, than that which the Light of Nature hath affixt to Paternal Benedictions, than what the holy Patriarchs before the Law did practise, than what under the Law in several the like cases was enjoyn'd, than what our Saviour did frequently use, and to conclude, than what humane Reason could not possibly invent any thing more plain and significant?

But, will some say, Was this all that the Apostles used, and did the Blessings of God follow the Imposition of Hands onely? No surely, there was something else belong'd to this great Office, and that of a higher and more valuable nature in it self, than what is here mentioned. We are told, *vers.* 15. that the Apostles, when they were come to *Samaria*, *prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost*. Prayer is an essential part of the Divine Worship, but Imposition of Hands is onely a decent and significant Ceremony proper and adapted to the present occasion. Their fervent and devout Prayers were the holy charms that invited the Spirit of God to descend from Heaven, but Imposition of Hands must be acknowledged onely as a decent Rite, made use of mainly to signifie that this Spirit would ordinarily come to none but by the mediation and ministry of those whom he had appointed.

'Tis very evident that Prayer was the main Duty, and Imposition of Hands the principal Ceremony; and this is All that we find here recorded concerning the nature of this holy Office. Where then shall we find the holy Chrism consecrated by the Bishop, which the Church of *Rome* calls the *Matter?*

ter? where ſtands recorded that jingling Sentence, *Signo te ſigno crucis, & confirmo te Chriſmate ſalutis, in nomine Patris, &c.* which they lay is the *Form* of their pretended Sacrament? If you will find them, you muſt ſearch Pope *Eugenius*'s Decretals to the *Armenians*, with the approbation of the Council of *Florence*; or if that will not ſatisfie, you may conſult the Council of *Trent*, and the Roman Catechiſm, which give a large and more plenary account of it: but let me advize you not to ſearch the Scriptures for it, for there you ſhall not find the leaſt tittle concerning it.

And yet 'tis ſomewhat ſtrange the Scriptures ſhould be ſilent in a buſineſs of ſuch importance; to record nothing but Prayer and Impoſition of Hands, and to paſs by the Matter and Form, the two eſſential parts of a Sacrament, ſeems to be an unpardonable omiſſion in thoſe holy Pen-men. But you will find the miſtake was not theirs; this Sacriledge or holy Cheat muſt be imputed to the Church of *Rome*, who ingenuouſly acknowledges that, *Loco illius manus impoſitionis, datur in Eccleſiâ confirmatio*; *i. e.* if we may be ſo bold as to render it into its true Engliſh, Prayer and Impoſition of Hands is juſtled out, and the holy Croſs, with ſanctified Balſam, and a kind of Charm at the end of it, is got into the Chair, and commenc'd a Sacrament. Had the Romaniſts retain'd Prayer and Impoſition of Hands, not advancing it to the honour of a Sacrament, but honouring it as a Sacramental complétion, (which is as much as it will amount to) and added the Croſs and Oyl only as decent and ſignificant Ceremonies to attend upon it, they had kept themſelves within the bounds of modeſty: for the truth is, Chriſm was of very ancient uſe even in this holy Office, together with the honourable badge of our Saviour's Croſs, as *Tertullian*, who lived in the latter end of the ſecond Century, teſtifies in his Tractate *De reſurrectione carnis*. *Caro abluitur, ut anima emaculetur: Caro ungitur, ut anima conſecretur: Caro ſignatur, ut & anima munitur: Caro manus impoſitione adumbratur, ut & anima ſpiritu illuminetur: Caro corpore & ſanguine Chriſti veſcitur, ut & anima de Deo ſaginetur.* Where you ſee, betwixt the two Sacraments he gives us an account of Confirmation, and the three Ceremonies that did then attend upon it, *viz.* The *ſigne*

of the Cross, *Unction*, and *Imposition of Hands*. And St. *Cyprian* about the middle of the third Century mentions the signe of the Cross in this holy Office, in his Epistle to *Jubaianus*; *Ut per nostram orationem ac manus impositionem spiritum sanctum consequantur, & signaculo Dominico consummentur.* So that it must be confest that these Ceremonies were of ancient use in the Church; and had they been retain'd onely as such, the more sober sort of Christians 'tis likely would not have been offended: But for the Church of *Rome* to lay aside the Apostolical Institution, and to advance these extrinsick Ceremonies to the same honour with the holy Eucharist, is a far greater crime than she committed in the Council of *Constance*, where she onely denies the Cup to the Laity, as resolving to keep them sober; but retains the use of both kinds to her proper Representatives, their Priests standing on tiptoe rather than leave the least drop behind them.

Here then you may plainly see the ignorance of some, and the impudence of others, who are Adversaries to our Church. The ignorance (I will not say the malice) of our late Dissenters, who alledg'd that this Office of *Confirmation*, as it is us'd in our Church, is a superstitious practice, and no better than a Transcript of the Popes Decretals; whereas if they are compar'd together, they are as opposite as light and darkness; their old Master *Cartwright*, who first broacht this Scandal, openly retracting it upon better information. Here you may likewise behold the forehead of those who pretend to pay a great reverence to Antiquity, who yet curtail one of the Sacraments with a *Non obstante*, and to make amends for it, adde five more as of equal dignity. 'Twould be matter of wonder that these things should gain so great a repute even amongst the vulgar, were it not that we see intelligent Kings and Princes to be every day impos'd upon with the supposed holiness of Toys and Trifles; for surely this new-coin'd Sacrament must be presum'd to do as much good to the partakers of it (if there be no real Obstacle to hinder its efficacy) as the *Consecrated Clouts* (and Rattles) lately sent from *Rome* to the Infant-Duke of *Burgundy*.

But to wave the levity of their Pretences, more fit for a Stage than a Pulpit, We of the Church of *England* retaining the

the Primitive Institution and practice, may comfortably expect a Blessing upon this holy Office; here being no *traditions of men* imposed upon us as the Commandments of Christ, no Prayers offered up upon this occasion but what the Church upon mature deliberation hath compos'd; no Ceremonies, as essential to the Office being here used, but what the Apostles practised; and all this as heretofore administred by the Apostles, so now by the Bishops their lawful Successors. And this brings me to the third, *viz.*

III. The peculiar Order of persons to whom the ministration of this holy Office is restrained. We find by the Context, that although St. *Philip* converted them to Christianity, and discipled them by the Sacrament of Baptism, yet this holy Office was perform'd by St. *Peter* and St. *John*, v. 14. *Now when the Apostles which were at* Jerusalem *heard that* Samaria *had received the Word of God, they sent* Peter *and* John. How! what is this that we hear? Was *Peter* sent? were the Subjects so sawcy and presumptuous as to send their Prince on their Errand? Is not this He from whom his present Holiness derives his Supremacy over all Dominions spiritual and temporal? Did not St. *Peter* understand his power, or was he so weak as sneakingly to betray the Prerogative of his Chair? Or if he did for that time suffer himself, like the titular Duke of *Venice*, to be concluded in the general Vote, yet could not his *Infallibility* guide him in executing the Commission? Must he have a Collegue appointed him to secure his Superiours that all things shall be rightly perform'd? Behold then the sandy Foundation upon which the Romanists erect a supreme and infallible Chair to his Holiness. O the miserable shifts that they make to avoid the force of this unhappy instance! And yet amongst them all, that which is the most plausible brings him to an equality with the rest of the Christian Bishops; for *A Lapide* tells us, that as the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son together sent the Holy Ghost, and yet all three equal in Glory and Authority; so St. *Peter* may be said to be sent by the rest of the Apostles, *non imperio*, as he quotes *Cajetan* for it, *sed fraterna charitate & impulsione.* In *Loc.*

Well, be it so, nay we may go far higher, and grant him to be

Conc. Constantin. 3.

be what they say the sixth general Council own'd him, *viz. Primus Episcoporum*, upon condition they will grant on the other side what the same Council plainly determines, *viz. Ut thronus Constantinopolitanus æqualia privilegia cum antiquæ Romæ throno obtineat.* Let him have the honor of precedency, let him upon all occasions be the Mouth of his Collegues, let him open and conclude general Councils, let him be what they pretend St. *Cyprian* owns, *viz.* the *Origo*, the *Principium*, the *Exordium unitatis*, provided they will grant him to be what the same holy Father says St. *Peter* was, in his golden Tractate *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, where after he has told us that Christ hath given *Apostolis omnibus parem potestatem*, he presently tells us, *Hoc erant utiq; & cæteri Apostoli quod fuit Petrus, pari consortio præditi & honoris & potestatis*; which *Rigaltius* miserably endeavours to evade, by granting an equality of Apostleship as to their persons, but denying it to their Successors; an Hypothesis altogether as absurd and groundless, as their pretended Donation from *Constantine* the Great. But though we may be so civil as to grant him to be *major singulis*, yet his being sent by the rest of the Apostles, clearly evinces him to be *Minor Universis*; which though it be a great Solœcism in the Civil, yet is not so in the Ecclesiastical Politicks. St. *Peter* you see was concluded by the general suffrage, and so his Successours ought to be, as the Councils of *Constance* and *Basil* have strenuously asserted.

Sent it seems these Apostles were, but what was the purport of their Commission? It was this, that by their Prayer and Imposition of Hands the Holy Ghost might descend upon the baptized Samaritans.

But what was the reason that St. *Philip*, a Minister of Gods Word, did not perform this Duty? He was their Father in Christ, and had begotten them to a lively Faith; he had renew'd their Spirits in the Laver of Baptism, and instructed them in the necessary Rudiments of Christianity; 'tis much that he did not solemnize this Office amongst them: Besides, Regeneration is of a higher nature than Confirmation, and he that gave the greater, why did he not give the less?

The reason is plain and evident, Because St. *Philip* was a person modest and faithful, and would not presume to act beyond

beyond his Commission; he knew that the Apostles had reserv'd this holy Office to their own ministration; and for him to attempt it, would have been a sin equal to that of the Sons of *Korah*, who invaded the Priesthood of *Aaron*.

But the Church of *Rome* says that his Holiness by the plenitude of his Apostolical Authority may make an inferiour Priest the Minister of this Sacrament. If so, 'tis much that St. *Peter* would give himself such an unnecessary trouble, that he would not take his ease at *Jerusalem*, and appoint St. *Philip* his lawful Substitute, giving him a Legantine power, as they say Deacons are capable of; Why, it seems St. *Philip* was more modest than to ask it; or if he had, St. *Peter* was more prudent than to grant it. Some things the Apostles did absolutely reserve to themselves and their Successors, which we the inferiour Officers of the Church may not, must not pretend to; and amongst them, this of Confirmation was one; and this St. *Cyprian* fully testifies in his forecited Epistle to *Jubaianus*, speaking of these Samaritans, *Quod deerat*, says he, *id à Petro & Johanne factum est, ut oratione pro eis habitâ, & manu impositâ invocaretur, & infunderetur Spiritus sanctus.* And that this was reserv'd to the Bishops, the Sons of the Apostles in his age, himself being a Metrapolitan Bishop, can best inform us: *Quod nunc quoq; apud nos geritur, ut qui in Ecclesiâ baptizantur, Præpositis Ecclesiæ offerantur, ut per nostram orationem & manus impositionem Spiritum sanctum consequantur, &c.* And this the indompatable *Hooker* out of St. *Jerom, adversus Luciferr*, proves to have been the practice of the fourth Century; who though no great friend to the Episcopal Order, yet tells us, that the custom of the Churches is, that the Bishop should go abroad, and imposing his hands, pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost on them whom Presbyters and Deacons, far off in lesser Cities, had already baptized.

Non abnuo hanc esse Ecclesiarum consuetudinem, &c. *Dial. Orth. & Lucif.*

And for good reason did the Apostles restrain this to themselves and their Successours, when we consider these following things:

1. That this did secure unto them the honour of their Apostolical Chairs; for the safety of the Church depends much upon the dignity of its Superiours, the respect that is given to their persons, the reverence that is paid to their functi-

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ons. Whereas if the chief Governours of the Church shall communicate to inferiour Orders their whole power, reserving nothing by way of pre-eminence to themselves to distinguish them from others; their power being thus made cheap, will become vile and despicable; the Hierarchy that Christ hath established in his Church will soon be destroyed, their Offices confounded, and that question of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 12. 29, *Are all Apostles, are all Prophets, are all teachers?* would be answered in the affirmative: and to be short, such a levelling of all Sacred Orders, would be the undoubted parent of multiplied Factions and Schisms. And though it may be objected that Confirmation is not of equal value with either of the Sacraments, both which inferiour Priests are capable of administring; yet it is by its restraint alone, sufficient to secure the honour of the Function: for though a Velvet coat be of far greater worth than a plain linnen coif, and the first may be worn by every common Lawyer, yet the second being appropriated to Sergeants and Judges, procures them a respect due to their place and dignity.

Hook. Ec. Pol. lib. 5. p. 355.

2. From hence the Apostles to whom the chief care of the Church was committed, were fully satisfyed as to the diligence and industry of the inferiour Officers whom they had deputed. When they should see them bring in full shoals and multitudes of Baptized Converts, offering up solemnly to God such fruits of their labours, and presenting them to the Apostles for their Fatherly Prayers and Benedictions, this could not but be a sufficient testimonial of their pains and faithfulness; and by this the Apostles visited the Clergy, exacting an account of their labours, as well as confirmed the Laity. And indeed no Society can be of long continuance, where there is not such a due subordination; an independency in the Church looses the bands, and weakens the sinews of Government. That Congregation wherein every Priest is a Bishop, and every Bishop a King, cannot be long without Tyranny: and that Assembly whose Members are superiour to the Pastor, and uncontrolable, cannot be long without Schism and Anarchy. But blessed be God, it was far otherwise in the Apostles times, and once again we see it otherwise in this our established Church, where the members of it in mat-

matters of Religion and Conscience are to be directed by their several Pastors; the Presbyters and Deacons owning themselves accountable for it to the Bishop, the Bishop to his Metropolitan, the Metropolitans to the King, and the King unto God. And when all these in their several spheres shall do nothing that they are afraid or ashamed should come to their Superiours cognizance, but rather be forward to give an account of their stewardships when required; this is the way to preserve the Church in its honour and unity: We of the inferiour Clergy giving demonstrations of our pains and industry, and our Superiours the Prelates and Fathers of the Church, reaping the comfort of seeing their Orders obeyed by a regular and industrious Clergy.

3. What a great comfort and satisfaction must needs arise to the Apostles, when they saw by the industry of others whom they had deputed, so great a part of their own burthen discharg'd, the seed of the Gospel growing up and flourishing in such tender plants; the great mysteries of Religion imbib'd by all sorts of people, young and old, and particularly so great a number of Samaritan-converts, owning them not only as Ministers of Christ, but as the principal Stewards of the Mysteries of God! What an opportunity was here offer'd them of glorifying of God, whose praise they found in the mouths of such Infant-Converts! The unspeakable comfort which they foresaw would arise from so grateful an object, might probably induce them to reserve this Office of Confirmation to themselves and their Successors; which though of an inferiour nature to Baptism, yet well becomes the highest Order in the Church; for hereby they do not only own and ratifie the proceedings of those whom they have deputed, setting their hands to the legality of it, which you know is the proper act of a Superiour; but they also confirm the Proselytes in their lately received Faith, provided themselves set no bar to hinder it. And this brings me to the fourth thing, *viz.*

IV. The qualifications of those to whom this Office is to be administred, which are these that follow.

1. It must be supposed that they are already made Disciples by Baptism, and that by persons lawfully ordained and ap-

appointed thereunto by the Apostles or their Successors, as we find the *Samaritans* here were by St. *Philip* the Deacon; and therefore (according to my present apprehension) those who have received their Baptism from Lay-hands, who cannot pretend to such a derived power, are not qualified for this holy Rite, unless perform'd in a time of absolute Necessity: And as for those who have received their Baptism from persons lawfully ordained, but such as by Schism or Heresie are professed enemies to our Church; I will not say that Rebaptization is necessary, lest I should seem to fall into the errour of St. *Cyprian* and his *Carthaginian* Council; but that it is highly necessary for such to address themselves to this holy mystery, that by *imposition of hands* they may be incorporated into the Church; and desiring the Bishops paternal benediction, acknowledge his superiority over them. That this is highly reasonable in it self, and agreeable to the practice of the Primitive Church, I need not prove to any one that has a competent share of Reason, or the least acquaintance with Antiquity.

2. It must be presumed that either before or after Baptism they are endowed with actual Faith in Christ: before Baptism, if they were adult persons; or after Baptism, if they were Infants at the ministring of it. A general faith before Baptism was sufficient at the first planting of the Gospel; the belief *that Jesus Christ was the Son of God* was enough to entitle them to Baptism: but when Churches were well constituted, great care was taken to instruct the adult Proselytes in all the Christian Fundamentals; such were the *Catechumens* of old; and both them and the Baptized Christians were fully instructed in all necessaries of Faith, before they were presented to the Bishop for Confirmation; as appears from the fore-cited Dialogue of St. *Jerom*, and from the exposition *Irenæus* gives of the 1 *Cor.* 3. 2. where he interprets the *Milk* with which he had fed some of the Baptized *Corinthians*, to be the *first principles of Christianity*; and the *holy spirit* obtained by *prayer* and *imposition of hands*, to be the *Esca vitæ*, the *stronger food* or meat of life; of which as yet they were uncapable, *Quoniam infirmum adhuc & inexercitabilem sensum erga Deum conversationis habebant.*

Dial. Orthod. & Lucifer.

Iren. lib. 5. cap. 75.

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3. It must be presumed that they do not onely competently understand the Fundamentals of Faith, the rule of their Manners, and the nature of their Baptismal vow, with all other things of absolute necessity, but that they here make an open profession of them, publickly owning their Faith to be Catholick, and their renunciation of all Spiritual Enemies sincere, their Vows and Resolutions fixt and permanent; solemnly renewing that promise that was made in their name at their Baptism, *ratifying and confirming the same in their own persons*, discharging their Sponsors, their Godfathers and Godmothers, from their former obligations, and *acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to do all those things which they undertook for them.* And all this is supposed to be done in the presence of God and his holy Angels; the Bishop being here as our Saviours Representative, (for so *Ignatius* often stiles him) and taking from each of them their several fealties and acknowledgments. So that if they shall prove Rebels or Apostates after such solemn Dedications of themselves unto God, after so deliberate a choice of their Religion, and renewing their Baptismal Covenant; the Font in which they were once regenerated will call them perjur'd, the very Rayles at which they are to kneel, will bring in evidence against them, and their own Consciences without the necessity of another Judge will at last condemn them. But if to all the presupposed qualifications they shall adde a good assurance, and humbly address themselves to the chief Pastors of the Church, that by their *Prayers* and *impositions of hands*, they may be confirm'd in their Faith, directed in their Manners, and enabled to perform such worthy resolutions, they need not question but *according to their faith so it shall be unto them.* And this brings me to the second General of the Text, *viz.*

Rubrick of Confirmation.

Ep. ad Smyrn. Πάντες τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ ἀκολουθεῖτε ὡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῷ Πατρί.

Ep. ad Trall. Τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ὑποτάσσεσθε ὡς Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. Πάντες ἐντρέπεσθε τὸν Ἐπίσκοπον ὡς Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

The wonderful Effects or Consequents of this duty. *And they received the holy Ghost.* 2 Gen.

But before I treat of this, I think it not altogether unseasonable to obviate an Objection, *viz.*

What need is there of all this adoe? Does not the Church of *England* teach that we receive the holy Ghost at our Baptism, that we are then *made members of Christ, Children of*

God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven? 'Tis true, we were at that time partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and entituled to all thoſe priviledges; but the gifts of the Spirit at that time imparted, were ſuitable to the ſtate and capacity wherein we then ſtood; remiſſion of ſins, and the promiſe of the further graces of Gods Spirit; an actual incorporation into Chriſts Church, and a title to the Kingdom of Heaven, was as much as at that time was neceſſary, eſpecially to Baptized Infants. The *Samaritans* here in the Text had undoubtedly the holy Ghoſt communicated unto them; and yet though they were adult perſons, it was thought neceſſary for them to receive from the Apoſtles *Impoſition of hands*, and by that a more abundant meaſure of the holy Ghoſt. Their former ſins, whether original or actual, were then remitted, and an aſſurance given them if they dy'd in that ſtate, that eternal happineſs ſhould be their portion; but here ſtrength is given them againſt future temptations, and their former title upon perſeverance fully ratifyed and confirm'd. And this is agreeable to what *Melciades* an excellent Biſhop (though of *Rome*) in the beginning of the fourth Century hath taught us, who in his Decretal Epiſtle to the Biſhops of *Spain*, (the former part whereof does indeed favour of arrogance, and being no way ſuitable to the modeſty of that Age, may be ſuppoſed ſpurious; but the latter part of it being agreeable to Primitive Doctrine, may be owned as genuine, and that) tells us; *Spiritus ſanctus qui ſuper aquas baptiſmi ſalutifero deſcendit illapſu, in fonte plenitudinem tribuit ad innocentiam, in confirmatione augmentum præſtat ad gratiam; & quia in hoc mundo tota ætate victuris inter inviſibiles hoſtes & pericula gradiendum eſt, in baptiſmate regeneramur ad vitam, poſt baptiſmum confirmamur ad pugnam.* For, ſays he, *As he that is by his General admitted a Souldier, is not onely ſign'd with a Military mark or badge, but is furniſht with all neceſſary armour, ſo this benediction is an arming of the Baptized. Dediſti militem*, ſays he, *da ei adjumenta militiæ. To what purpoſe*, ſays that good Biſhop, *does a Father bequeath a great eſtate to his Son, niſi providere ſtudeat & Tutorem, unleſs he likewiſe provides a Tutor or Guardian for him?*

Ep. decret. ad Ep. Hiſp.

I will not say, with some, that at this time a Guardian-Angel is allotted to each person here confirmed; I heartily wish it were so, but I have no convincing reason to conclude it: for should we positively assert what ever we think expedient, we should soon erect an infallible Person or Society to secure our selves from all material errours. However, this I may safely assert, with that holy Bishop and Martyr afore-cited; *Paracletus regeneratis in Christo Custos & Consolator & Tutor est*, *The Holy Spirit is appointed to such persons a Keeper, a Comforter, and a Guardian.*

Let us then, in pursuance of the second General, inquire into the great and stupendious effects of this holy Office.

I. And what they were upon the first ministration of it particularly here in the Text. Some are of opinion that the holy Ghost upon the Apostles *Prayers* and *laying on of hands*, did visibly descend upon the confirmed Christians, as he did on our Saviour after his Baptism, and upon the Apostles on the day of *Pentecost*: others think it sufficient, that upon the Apostles ministration of this Office, the gifts of the holy Spirit were convey'd unto them. Thus St. *Stephen* was said to be *full of the holy Ghost*.

The gifts that were convey'd were of two sorts; ordinary, and extraordinary. The extraordinary were such as the infancy of the Church did then necessarily require, such were working of Miracles, speaking strange Languages, prophesying of future events, and the like; which gifts as many of the present *Samaritans* were endowed with, as the Apostles thought good to set apart and consecrate to the holy Ministry. These were the *gratiæ gratis datæ*, which at that time qualified them for the better discharge of their duty; very proper to create Faith in the hearts of men, and to gain the Gospel a ready entertainment.

Some that would vilifie this holy Office as it is now administred, pretend that none but such extraordinary gifts were at this time conferr'd, and that for the constituting of a Church, and enabling them to propagate the Faith. But how weak and frivolous this assertion is, appears from the number of these confirmed *Samaritans*, who in all probability were all that *believed and were baptized*, and those, *v.* 6. were *the people*

with one accord; *from the leaſt to the greateſt*, v. 10. *both men and women*, v. 12. Now is it likely that a whole City, which according to its name, was not onely for ſtatelineſs of Palaces, but multitude of inhabitants auguſt and venerable, ſhould be deſtined and ſet apart by the Apoſtles to the holy Miniſtry? What kind of Church were they likely to found at *Samaria*, where like a *Dover*-court all ſhould be ſpeakers and no hearers, eſpecially where ſo many women were permitted to tattle? what a uniform body was this likely to be, which ſhould be made up of Eyes, and Tongues, and Hands, and no other Members to ſecure it from being monſtrous? whereas St. *Paul* tells us, *The body is not one member, but many*; and *the manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*. The holy oyntment that was poured on *Aarons head*, *ran down his beard*, even *to the skirts of his cloathing*; and theſe great effuſions of the Spirit were extended, though not in the ſame, yet in a ſufficient meaſure, to the meaneſt of Chriſts members. In *Acts* 2. 41. we read of *three thouſand ſouls* converted in one day; and in *Chap.* 4. 31. we find that *the place was ſhaken where they were aſſembled together*, *and they were all filled with the holy Ghoſt*. Here was an extraordinary confirmation, and yet no extraordinary gifts (as we read of) beſtowed: all that is recorded of the effects of this holy Spirits deſcent is this, that *they ſpake the word of God with boldneſs*; that they were endowed with a true Chriſtian courage and magnanimity to profeſs the Goſpel, nowithſtanding the greateſt diſcouragements they met with. 'Tis not unlikely but that in anſwer to their Prayers, *v.* 30. God ſtretched forth his hand to heal, *and ſigns and wonders were done by the Name of his holy child Jeſus*: but that any ſuch new gifts were then beſtowed, we have no ground from Scripture to affirm; and that ſo many thouſands ſhould be miraculouſly impowr'd to preach the Goſpel in our modern ſenſe, we have no reaſon to believe.

Beſides thoſe extraordinary Gifts beſtowed upon particular perſons for ſpecial ends and purpoſes, there were the ordinary and internal Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the *Gratiæ gratos facientes*, that were common unto them all, and did render them acceptable unto God. Such were the inlightning of their

their minds, the inflaming of their affections, the endowing them with meekneſs and patience, with courage and comfort; the inward aſſiſtances of this Spirit, by which their Faith was ſtrengthned, their Hope confirm'd, their Charity enlarg'd, and all their good deſires became vertuous habits, and all their holy reſolutions arm'd with ſtrength for their performance.

The former ſort of Gifts were of a temporary nature, to continue no longer than the infancy of the Church then requir'd: they were *ſigna tempori opportuna*, adapted to its preſent neceſſities; but the ſecond ſort of Gifts are proper to all Ages, and therefore to continue till the diſſolution of the World; according to that of St. *Chryſ.* in his 13th Hom. on St. *Mat.* thus engliſhed by a Reverend and Learned Prelate of our Church: *In the beginning of ſpiritual and marvellous Diſpenſations, outward ſignes appeared to confirm the new-preached Faith; but now that the Faith is ſufficiently confirm'd, although ſuch Miracles be not wrought, yet we receive thoſe inward Graces and Vertues which were ſignified and demonſtrated by thoſe ſignes.* Biſh. *Sparrow's* Ration. p. 311

Now thoſe Signes were the Gifts by which *Simon Magus* was at firſt detected at *Samaria*, and at laſt baffled at *Rome*; by theſe the *Wiſe men* and the *Scribes* were ſilenc'd, the *Athenian Philoſophers* confounded, and the *honeſt-hearted* both *Jews* and *Heathens* converted. This was *the demonſtration of Spirit and of Power*, which the Apoſtles and their immediate Succeſſours did exerciſe; and yet *they did not make the comers thereunto perfect.* They were Gifts highly admirable and ſtupendious in themſelves, and as deſirable for their effects; and yet, as deſirable as they were, *I can ſhew you*, out of St. *Paul*, *a more excellent way*, and that is the ſecond thing propos'd, *viz.*

II. That the conſequents of it now upon its preſent adminiſtration by Epiſcopal, are altogether as valuable as thoſe were that heretofore proceeded from Apoſtolical hands. The ſpeaking ſtrange Languages was a gift highly advantageous to the Church in general, but did not ſanctifie the heart, or create any inward Grace in him that had it: *Though I ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become*

become as ſounding Braſs, or as a tinkling Cymbal. The working of Miracles was proper to produce Reverence in the Beholders, and to command their aſſent to what ſhould be delivered; but *though I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, and have no charity,* ſays St. *Paul, I am nothing.* Charity is *the Bond of Perfectneſs,* the height and eminency of all Chriſtian Vertues; 'tis that which actuates and invigorates all other Graces, without which Faith would be dead, and Hope would be preſumptuous. This intirely unites us unto God, and makes us love our Neighbour as our ſelves. This fixes our reſolutions, and arms us againſt all manner of Temptations. This keeps us low and Infantlike under the moſt proſperous ſucceſſes, and buoys up our ſouls from under the hardeſt preſſures. This makes us humble and condeſcending to our Inferiours, courteous and affable to our Equals, lowly and ſubmiſſive (notwithſtanding the greateſt diſappointments we meet with) to our Superiours. Finally to conclude, this is the Holy Ghoſt in the Text, I mean the complement and perfection of all his Graces that the perſons now to be confirmed are to be filled with.

1 Cor. 13. 1, 2.

Acts 2.39. The promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, as St. *Peter* told the Jews, was *unto them and to their children, and to all that are afar off,* afar off not onely in diſtance of place, but in diſtance of time and relation; and this promiſe, though not of miraculous Gifts, yet of what infinitely outweighs them, the internal ſanctifying Graces of his Spirit, the fruits whereof are *Love,* Gal. 5.22. *Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance:* that very Promiſe will on this day be perform'd, and theſe Graces will now be communicated, if they themſelves do not put a bar, and hinder the efficacy of this holy Office. And that you may be confirm'd in the belief of this great truth, let me requeſt you to conſider well the third thing propos'd, *viz.*

III. That the ſeeming diſproportion betwixt the outward means and the inward effects, ought not to prejudice any conſiderative perſon againſt the power and efficacy of this Office.

Will ſome ſay, How is it poſſible that upon ſo ſlight an action as laying on of hands, and the Biſhops Prayers, ſo much

much ſtrength againſt all Temptations, ſo much ability to perform all acceptable Duties, ſhould be conveyed unto us? 'Tis true, the meanneſs and ſimplicity of the Ceremony is apt to ſcandalize him who underſtands not the invincible power of God, which oftentimes effects great and ſtupendious Works by light and improbable means; here is nothing (as in the Church of *Rome*) of pomp and ſolemnity to attract your eyes and raiſe your admiration, nothing but what the holy Apoſtles did practiſe, and that in a very plain yet comely dreſs.

My Father, ſaid the Servant of *Naaman*, *if the Prophet had bid thee do ſome great thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? how much rather when he ſaith unto thee, Waſh and be clean?*

Diſpute not then the poſſibility or manner of its conveyance, but ſince thou haſt as much need of the Holy Spirit in thy capacity as the primitive Chriſtians had in theirs, fully perſwade thy ſelf that he will not be wanting to thy devout deſires, but as readily aſſiſt thee as he did them; and will no more ſcorn to be invited down now, than heretofore he hath been by Prayer and Impoſition of Hands: For if this Objection be of any force, we may upon equal grounds be ſcandaliz'd at the two great Sacraments; the viſible ſignes whereof are altogether as mean, and in themſelves improbable. *Nihil adeo eſt*, ſays *Tertullian*, *quod tam obduret mentes hominum, quam ſimplicitas divinorum operum quæ in actu videtur, & magnificentia quæ in effectu repromittitur.* *De Baptiſ.*

Others may again object, that if Miracles did now as heretofore attend this Office, they ſhould then have reaſon to believe that great and valuable are the inward effects of it; but ſince thoſe are ceas'd, they ſee not why this Office ſhould not ceaſe with them.

But in anſwer to this, we muſt know that Miracles were not of the eſſence of this holy Office; for if they had, they would have been eſſential to other Offices which they did ſometimes attend upon. The *Holy Ghoſt* we find *in a viſible manner deſcended upon our Saviour* at his baptiſm; and yet the Holy Ghoſts *viſible deſcent* never was lookt upon as eſſential to that Sacrament. When St. *Peter* preacht the Goſpel S. Mat. 3. 16

ſpel to *Cornelius* and his Companions, we are told that *while* Peter *yet ſpake thoſe words, the Holy Ghoſt fell on all them which heard the Word*; *for they heard them ſpeak with tongues, and magnifie God*; and yet the Gift of *Languages* never was imagin'd to be of the eſſence of Preaching. So that we may with equal reaſon be ſcandaliz'd at thoſe two great Offices, and pretend that the internal Gifts of Gods Spirit do not follow the performance of thoſe Duties, becauſe the external ones are wholly ceas'd.

Acts 10. 44, 46.

Neither ought this to ſcandalize any, That they do not meet with ſenſible alterations, violent motions, ſtrong convulſions and tremblings: for though ſometimes the Spirit upon ſtrong convictions may produce ſuch effects, yet here where a due preparation is ſuppos'd, and not a diſpoſſeſſing of Satan, but ſtrength againſt him is wrought, ſuch a violent commotion of the Spirits cannot be expected. But the Holy Ghoſt comes here in a *ſoft voice*, works gently and mildly upon the rational and intellectual parts of man, and by degrees moulds and faſhions him into the *perfect ſtature* of the Sons of God. As we are not ſenſible of our natural growth, how every day new acceſſions are made to the ſeveral parts of our body, and yet that we do grow, our ſenſes do ſufficiently evince: ſo neither can it reaſonably be expected that we ſhould underſtand the mode of the divine operations, and the way how ſuch vital ſtrength and nouriſhment is convey'd to our Souls; although after a competent progreſs in the ways of Vertue, we may ſafely conclude that we are grown in Grace; *The Spirit of God bearing witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the Sons of God.*

IV. Behold then the excellency, the uſefulneſs, the neceſſity of this great Office, an Office whoſe antiquity bears date with the holy Scriptures; whoſe lawfulneſs the great Examples of our Saviour and his Apoſtles (not to ſay any thing of the conſtant and uninterrupted uſage of it in the Church for many Ages) do vindicate; an Office whoſe expedience and neceſſity of continuance, the great ends and purpoſes for which it was inſtituted, *viz.* the conveying the manifold Gifts of Gods Spirit, do ſufficiently evince; an Office always accounted ſo ſacred, that our late *Uſurping Presbyters* never durſt

durſt pretend to the actual exerciſe of it; an Office from which baptized perſons may expect ſuch great and admirable advantages as far ſurpaſs whatever the Gift of Tongues could expreſs, or Miracles declare; an Office whoſe good influences nothing can hinder, but the bars and obſtructions that our ſelves do ſet: finally, an Office which in no part of it lies open to any ſolid Objections even from the worſt of Adverſaries.

To conclude then this our long and (as I am afraid) tireſom Diſcourſe, let all be perſwaded in their ſeveral Spheres to promote the honour of this excellent Work. Old men and maidens, young men and children, of what ſtate or quality ſoever, let 'em be ready to entertain this bleſſed Spirit, who is now (as it were) hovering over your heads, and willing to come down into all prepared hearts.

And you that intend this day to be partakers of this great Myſtery, that deſire this holy *Comforter* to deſcend from Heaven and take poſſeſſion of your hearts; you that earneſtly long for the refreſhing and ſtrengthening Graces of Gods Spirit; you who are now to engage with *Principalities and Powers*, with the deceitful World and your own Luſts, and come hither to be enabled to *fight that good fight*, and to come off Conquerours: Let me requeſt you deeply to imprint upon your thoughts, not onely the excellency of this Duty, with the gracious effects thereof; but eſpecially that ſolemn profeſſion that you are here to make, the Covenant with God and his Church that you are about to renew, the ſtrict Obligations that lie upon you from thence of being pious and devout, juſt and charitable, meek and temperate.

For if you come prepar'd with ſuch generous Chriſtian reſolutions as theſe, you need not queſtion but the Graces of Gods Spirit will by the mediation of this his principal Steward, be conveyed unto you; *for which you have the ſame warrant*, as the judicious *Hooker* obſerves, *which the Patriarchs, Prophets, Prieſts, Apoſtles, Fathers, and men of God in all Ages have had for ſuch their particular Invocations and Benedictions.* *Hook.* Eccleſ. Pol. lib. 5.

Addreſs your ſelves then to the holy Altar with decency, receive the Bleſſing with Faith and Humility, turn not the *Grace* you are this day to receive *into wantonneſs*; but treaſure

ſure it up in an honeſt heart, and let the fruits thereof be diſcernable in your lives: then will you ſecure to your ſelves that ſeven-fold Gift of the Spirit which the Biſhop with the Congregation will preſently pray for; *The Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding, the Spirit of Counſel and Ghoſtly ſtrength, the the Spirit of Knowledge and true Godlineſs, and the Spirit of his holy Fear.*

And for us of the Clergy, as we have reaſon to glory in the number of our *Catechumens*, and to magnifie the God of Heaven for this joyful fruit of our labours: So let us be perſwaded to continue this good Work that is ſo happily begun, and by catechizing and wholſome inſtructions, prepare the younger ſort ſucceſſively for the like Bleſſings. This will engage his Lordſhip to continue his intended kindneſs, in coming as it were to our doors, though to his great charge, to adminiſter this Office; and we ſhall all reap this comfort by it, that *the Children that are yet unborn will ſtand up and call us bleſſed.*

And that this holy Office may have its deſired effect, that when the Biſhop *lays his hands upon them*, they may be *filled with the Holy Ghoſt*, Let us All here aſſembled, at the pronouncing of each Benediction, unanimouſly ſay, *AMEN.*

FINIS.